

## Constantine and His Colleagues 7<sup>1</sup>

the guards from Constantine's sleeping apartment. Fausta laid the whole scheme before her husband, who ordered one of his eunuchs to sleep in the royal chamber. Maximian, rising in the dead of night, told the sentries that he had dreamed an important dream which he wished at once to communicate to his son-in-law and thus gained entrance to the room. Drawing his sword, he cut off the eunuch's head and rushed out boasting that he had slain Constantine — only to be confronted by Constantine himself at the head of a troop of armed men. The corpse was brought out ; the self-convicted murderer stood " speechless as Marpcasian flint." Constantine upbraided him with his treachery, gave him permission to choose his own mode of dying, and Maximian hanged himself, " drawing " — as Virgil had said — " from the lofty beam the noose of shameful death."

Such is the story of Lactantius ; it could scarcely be more circumstantial. But if this had been the manner of Maximian's death, it is hardly possible that the other historians would have passed it by in silence. Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, simply says that Maximian strangled himself; Aurelius Victor that he justly perished (*jure pcrierat*). The author of the Seventh Panegyric declares that, though Constantine offered him his life, Maximian deemed himself unworthy of the boon and committed suicide.\* Eutropius, evidently borrowing from Lactantius, remarks that Maximian paid the

\**Necesse dignum vita jttttifavi*^ *CUM per ta lieerit ut vivewt*\* — Pan. et.^ vii., 20.